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## BEAUTY'S BEAST

Paola Pallottino

*Au même instant il entendit un grand bruit, et vit venir à lui une bête si horrible, qu'il en fut tout près de s'évanouir.*

With these words, which are found in the same text as the following declaration: "mais la cadette surtout se faisait admirer, et on ne l'appelait, quand elle était petite, que la Belle Enfant," Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont waives all attempts at describing the ineffable, namely the sublimely monstrous and the sublimely beautiful. These two qualities counter each other throughout the fairy-tale of "Beauty and the Beast," which appeared for the first time in 1756 in the *Magasin des Enfants*.<sup>1</sup>

Further on, the author introduces capital letters – "Je ne m'appelle point Monseigneur," répondit le monstre, "mais la Bête" – describing the voice as "voix terrible," with a "sifflement si épouvantable, que tout le palais en retentit," so much so that Beauty "ne put s'empêcher de frémir" on hearing "le bruit que faisait la Bête"; the text also adopts pointed adjectival terms such as "villain monstre," "horrible figure," and "bien laid," which evoke the myth of bestial monstrosity drawn from archetypes, but fail to give any detail of the physical features, as if she were confirming the impossibility of translating the idea into a viable graphic image of the Beast.

But what are the origins of the tale of "Beauty and the Beast"? In the Romantic era, Collin de Plancy<sup>2</sup> began an inquiry into the motives underlying our legacy of fairy-tales, much of which had been handed down aurally from generation to generation, and consequently no one had considered it worthy of study. In 1883, however, Mme De Lescure noted that "Beauty and the Beast" was an adaptation of a tale by Charles Perrault called "Riquet à la Houppe."<sup>3</sup> Bruno Bettelheim has traced it back to "The Frog Prince" and the series of tales in which the betrothed is an animal (which probably drew their inspiration from the myth of Cupid and Psyche), i.e., the kind of fable which uses the metaphor of a "sexual partner who is first introduced as an animal" and who only at the end of the tale "is transformed into a beautiful person" for the purpose of exemplifying how love requires "a radical change of attitudes regarding sex."<sup>4</sup> In his seminal work, "Beauty and the Beast, from Myth to Fairy Tale,"<sup>5</sup> Jacques Barchilon gives a psycho-analytical reading of the material, outlining the various stages the story went through before reaching its definitive version. Barchilon's analysis covers the contents of the tale entitled "The Pig King" taken from

*Pleasurable Nights* written by Straparola in 1550, the fable "Catenaccio" contained in the 1636 collection *Pentamerone* by Basile, the tale "Riquet à la Houppe" mentioned above (dated 1697) and the version in "Inès de Cordoue, Nouvelle espagnole" by Bernard dating from 1697, the fables "Mouton," "Le serpent in vert" and "Le Prince Marcassin" by Mme. D'Aulnoy, also from 1697, and finally a version predating the account by Mme Leprince de Beaumont, which used the title "Beauty and the Beast" for the first time in "La jeune Américaine et les contes marins," dating from 1740.<sup>6</sup>

In this essay we will be looking through the many illustrations used through the ages for "Beauty and the Beast" and we shall analyze the interpretation and figurative evolution of the Beast, with an occasional glance back in time to classical iconography. The first stage takes us through two centuries of illustrations from various sources of the tale, showing the usual tendency to illustrate certain descriptive passages in the text in favor of others. The "saturated" moments of the narrative which have stimulated the imagination of illustrators the most are "The Beast appears before the Merchant," "The Beast is granted permission to sit with Beauty at the Dinner-table," and "Beauty's Grief at the Beast's Death." These illustrations often accompany others, either together or in part, in a single volume, and therefore facilitate the comparison of various types.

What sort of idea of the Beast do the illustrators draw from, since the text supplies no details whatsoever? With so little to go on, most illustrators have read through the text, trying to compound a suitable image to depict the weird mixture of gentleness and ferocity present in the Beast's character. The myths have had a strong influence—the various combinations of Arianna/Minotaur, Circe/pigs, Satyr/Nymphs prompting identification of the Beast with dragons and other hybrid animal forms: dogs, cats, goats, bulls, and so forth<sup>7</sup> (see Ducornet's illustrations [Fig. 1], which, drawing from the Beast in Cocteau's film



Fig. 1. *Beauty and the Beast*, 1968. Line drawing by Erica Ducornet.



Fig. 2. Walter Crane, *Beauty and the Beast* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1874-1875). Xylography with colored blocks by Edmund Evans after drawings of Walter Crane.

(1946),<sup>8</sup> also allude to the clothing of Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII). Besides these allusions to the frightfulness of the Beast, the illustrations tend to draw on a variety of iconographic sources portraying giants, savages, or the like, while the diabolical aspect of the Beast is carefully stated by referring to classical images of the Devil, which the Bible and the Apocalypse describe as "the beast." In this last meaning, namely as the Devil, we find a sudden switch in roles: for the scene where the merchant encounters the Beast (Figs. 4-9), the iconography is distinctly reminiscent of scenes of Christ's Temptation: the two figures meet in a garden far away in the



Fig. 3. *Tentazione di Cristo* [Temptation of Christ], in G.P. Ferraro, *Tesaurus Spirituale* (Milano: G. & G. Le Signerre, 1499). Anonymous xylography.



Fig. 4. "Vous êtes bien ingrat, lui dit la bête, d'une voix terrible," in *La Belle et la Bête*, Mme Leprince de Beaumont, *Magasin des Enfants ou Dialogues d'une sage gouvernante avec ses élèves* (Paris: Le Prieur, 1807). Drawing by Huot.

open), and the "Tempter" is usually stationed on the right of the picture (Fig. 3).

The series of illustrations belonging to the second group, which show Beauty and the Beast together, have their origins in the archetypal relationship considered "against nature," i.e., the pairing of woman with beast—a theme which recurs throughout mythology as a metaphor for that particular blend of sexual desire and fear of violence. Here the root of the words "épou(x)" and "épou(vant)" give further emphasis to the nature of the union, which has been variously portrayed through mythical literature, from Leda to King Kong, generating a fertile range of images, as with the image of a woman sitting astride a bull; this, according to P. Grimal, "is open to a variety of different interpretations, from the Rape of Europa to the loves of Pasiphaë, or some other subject."<sup>9</sup> Writing on this topic, M.P. Nilsson declares that images of this kind "are what myths are made of,"<sup>10</sup> and were indeed the foundation of many of the Greek myths we know today. The Greek word "mythos" is translated in Latin as "fabula," and in light of this, we shall examine the second group of illustrations.

We know that it is Love, and not the Beast himself, which frees Beauty from the spell that makes her see her partner as a monster. In the meantime, she is condemned to bear his presence at the table. The Neo-Classical flavor of the anonymous xylography made in 1840 showing the Beast as a sort of



Fig. 5. "Vous êtes bien ingrat, lui dit la bête, d'une voix terrible," in *La Belle et la Bête*, Mme Leprince de Beaumont, *Magasin des Enfants ou Dialogues d'une sage gouvernante avec ses élèves* (Paris: Billois, 1808). Drawing and copper-engraving by Huot.



Fig. 6. "Le Marchand et la Bête - Le Marchand apporte une rose à la Belle," in *La Belle et la Bête*. Illustrated serialized story, from: "La Semaine des Enfants," No. 598, douzième vol., Paris, 21 juin 1865. Xilography by Charles Rod, after Jules Pelcoq's drawing.

circus giant with Pollock overtones (Fig. 16) is replaced by the romantic bent of the successive illustrations; this trend reaches a peak in Bertall's riveting account (Fig. 13), in which the two opposite poles of beauty and horror are espoused with the stark contrasts of black and white, diabolic and angelic, and we see the Beast leering at Beauty from behind a high-backed Renaissance chair. The mechanical stiffness of his pose makes him resemble some ghoulish Jack-in-the-box. With the exception of Figures 13 and 14, in which Beauty is seated before two small, coquettish round tables, the sacrificial rite of the innocent lamb generally takes place at a vast table which evokes a sense

both of feasting and of the Mass accentuated by the white of the tablecloth. Here the repugnant bulk of the Beast is caught as he observes the maiden eating, and this is the moment which epitomizes the fall of the sublime, the implication is clear: only two of the same kind may eat at the same table, which is an indication of how these two figures represent two sides of the same coin.

This idea comes across sharply in Walter Crane's illustrations for the story (Fig. 14). Here the Empire decor, painstakingly depicted in every detail, provides us with a series of symbolic allusions to the animal world, from the frieze on the harpsichord depicting Orpheus placating a wild beast, to the zoomorphic



Fig. 7. Walter Crane, *Beauty and the Beast* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1874-1875). Xilography with colored blocks by Edmund Evans after Walter Crane's drawing.



Fig. 8. *Beauty and the Beast*, in *The Classic Fairy Tales* (London: Blackie, 1886). Xilography after Gordon Brown's drawing.

decorations of the many objects about the room: the lions' heads and paws of the divan and footrest, the pseudo-chimaeras holding up the tabletop, the leopard-skin rug. Beauty's gown rests gently on it, while the Beast's hooves are buried well into the pile. On another page, Crane is even more explicit in his portrait of Beauty, against a tapestry backcloth depicting the Serpent tempting Eve with the apple. The apparent static nature of the frontal composition of the picture is in perfect equilibrium; both Beauty and the Beast are sitting on a di-

van, she gently swathed in a tunic, with long gloves and an elaborate Neo-Classical Greek hairstyle, and he, a hairy boar dressed up as a country gentleman, is complete with monocle, frilled cuffs and shirtfront, his name held in a small bow. The pointed ambiguity of the scene is further conveyed by the unmistakable fact that during the apparent "silent intercourse" the glance of each of the figures has come to rest on the sex of the other. The ploy of hiding the sexual organs in order to give them immediate emphasis is used extensively, as can be seen in Figs. 14, 19 and 20. Here the Beast draws attention to his sex with his hat, which he holds fast between his legs, while attention is drawn to Beauty's by the lace cuff of one of her sleeves, dangling across her knee. Going one step further, the radials of Beauty's raised fan converge on the center of her desire, while the Beast's mandolin, resting on the ground, is exactly placed to catch the monster's piercing gaze as it passes through the maiden's lap.

But what exactly is happening in this apparent stasis? The Beast's leaden silence is compromised by the placing of his rigid "paw" along the headboard of the divan sufficient to imply an act of aggression, while Beauty strikes an anticipatory pose, her legs outstretched down to the footrest, seemingly readying herself. The composition of the two bodies moves in a circular direction, centered on the teacups, which, caught in the cross-fire of glances, take on the aspect of sacred vessels arranged liturgically on the low table separating Beauty and the Beast. The *spleen* and the sense of total suspension that pervades many illustrations of the theme is most noticeable in Figs. 15 and 18, which expose the impossibility of hiding his animal nature through the dialogue in which the Beast utters the lament "Je





Fig. 9. "The good merchant let drop the rose and flung himself on his knees," *Beauty and the Beast*, in *The Sleeping Beauty and other fairy tales*, retold by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910). Color illustrations by Edmund Dulac.

n'ai point d'esprit," showing himself to be deeply aware not only of his immense ugliness but of being without "spirit" (a grave omission in the 18th century), i.e., of being stupid, or, as the French put it, guilty of "bêtise."

Another series which deserves attention is the group of sensuous musical illustrations done by Eleanor Vere Boyle (Fig. 15); these are steeped in the rite of seduction (notice the allusive seven-spouted flask in the foreground) and are set in a pre-raphaelite landscape, in the corner of a castle heavily draped with curtains and tapestries, with a window opening onto a mediterranean countryside full of pine trees and cypresses entwined with grapevines. To one side of the table, in total contrast to the airy folds of Beauty's gown and the phytomorphic arrangement of her hair, we find the Beast, in his repugnant coat of black body hair, snared in some dreadful pact, the materialization of some nightmare in the form of a ghastly giant rat with long sabre-like claws reaching out towards the table,



Fig. 10. *Beauty and the Beast*, Charles Perrault, *Old Time Stories* (London, 1921). Line drawing by William Heath Robinson.

Fig. 11. [Mme Leprince de Beaumont], *Beauty and the Beast, a Fairy Tale*, autograph manuscript, 1842. Facsimile reproduction (New York: Perpont Morgan Library, 1973).



Fig. 12. Mme Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la Bête*, in *Magasin des enfants*, deuxième édition (Paris: Librairie pittoresque de la jeunesse, 1846). Xilography by Loiseau after Th. Guérin's drawing.



Fig. 13. "La Belle, lui dit ce monstre, voulez-vous que je vous voie souper?" in *Contes de fées*, tirés de Claude [sic] Perrault, Mmes d'Aulnoy et Leprince de Beaumont (Paris: Hachette, 1860). Xilography after drawings by Bertal (Albert d'Arnoux).



none of which escapes Beauty, although she seems locked in a trance, eyes closed. The sensuous fluidity of the scene and the immobility of the two figures (who seem masked and fixed in careful pose) is cut through by an electric tension that casts an ominous glow over everything.

All the illustrations in the third group, with Beauty stooped over the dying Beast, allude to the iconography of Mourning and "Pietà" scenes from the Passion. But only six of those reviewed here respect the indications given by Mme Leprince de Beaumont in her book, which sets the agony in a garden, near a canal (which illustrators tend to translate in the generic idea of water, either as a lake or fountain), from which Beauty fetches water for the dying monster. The remaining illustrations take up the idea of Beauty's dream of the monster lying helpless on the grass. The six illustrations I have chosen to examine (which span a full century) clearly demonstrate the evolution of style from 1811 to 1910. Ranging from the splendid "Niobe Neo-classica" of Fig. 23 to the more romantic leanings of Figs. 22 and 24, Beauty is slumped over the body of a Beast, which variously takes on the form of a wild boar, a wolf, or a kind of elephant.

But despite the efforts of the illustrators to give features to the Beast just before his metamorphosis, when he is at the very nadir of his animal state, Fig. 2 by Walter Crane and Fig. 25 by Henry Ford, derived from the first, seem to be vying for the most ambiguous reading: they show us Beauty in typical 18th-century dress (large-buckled shoes, "cul de crin" and plumed felt hat) almost doubled over on the Beast, whose virility is implied by his thick boots, and, more overtly phallic, by the Beast's jutting snout (in Crane's illustration) and the clenched fist pointing upwards (in Ford's).

The former also features two monkey-pages bringing water to their master; the raised torch reveals their expression of surprise, as if they had caught the couple in an explicit sexual act.

The latter illustration has the flavor of an intimate union, emphasized all the more by the gloom of the grotto in which the couple has taken refuge.

To conclude, I would like to hazard a guess as to the reason for the inexplicable oriental attire of the leading characters in a great many illustrations of the fable from the first half of the 19th century<sup>11</sup> (Figs. 4-5). Rather than the result of the dominant taste for the exotic which characterized the Rococo style throughout the 18th century (which was strongly influenced by Galland's popular translation of "The 1001 Nights"), the attire is more plausibly due to the immediate success of "Beauty and the Beast." After the English translation in "The Young Misses Magazine" in 1791 (in Italy the tale became popular under the title of "Bellinda" or "Belinda e il mostro"), there were also various theatrical pieces centered on the tale,<sup>12</sup> like the parody "Zémire et Azor" written by J.F. Marmontel in 1778<sup>13</sup> with music by A. Grétry, which toured Europe with increasing success for almost a century. The piece included a servant, Ali, whom Méry defined as "More beastly than the Beast."<sup>14</sup> The hypothesis that the operetta may have influenced illustrators cannot be extended to the case of Dulac, a passionate scholar of Persian miniatures, who preferred the Orient as the setting for three of the four tales from the "Sleeping Beauty" collection (Figs. 9 and 26).



Fig. 14. Waller Crane, *Beauty and the Beast* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1874-1875). Xilography with colored blocks of Edmund Evans after drawings by Waller Crane.

Fig. 15. *Beauty and the Beast, an Old Tale Newly Told, with pictures by E.V. Boyle* (London: Samson Low, Marston Low and Searle, 1875). Probably color print of wood blocks with oil pigments after drawings by Eleanor Vere Boyle.



Fig. 16. *Beauty and the Beast, in Popular Tales of the Olden Time, by a Lady* (London: Dean and Martin, ca. 1840). Anonymous xilography.



Fig. 17. *La Belle e la Bestia, in C. Collodi, I racconti delle fate* (Firenze: Paggi, 175). Zinco-graphy by Enrico Mazzanti.



Fig. 18. *Bellinda e il Mostro*, in C. Causa, *I Racconti delle Fate* (Firenze: Salani, 1914). Line drawing by Carlo Chiostri.

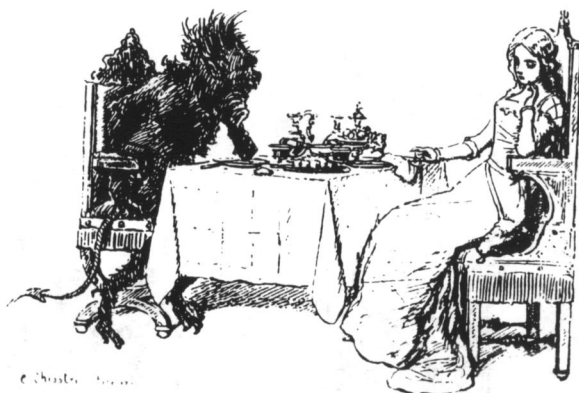


Fig. 20. Perrault and Mme Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la Bête*, in *Favole francesi* (Lanciano Carabba, n.d. [ca. 1920]). Mezzotint illustration by Fabio Fabbi.



Fig. 19. *Jack and the Giant Killer and Beauty and the Beast* (London: Dent, 1894). Xilography after drawings by Robert Anning Bell.



Fig. 21 Mmes d'Aulnoy and Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la Bête*, in *Contes de Fées* (Paris: H. Laurens, n.d. [1913]). Line drawing by Henry Morin.



Fig. 22. Charles Perrault, Mmes d'Aulnoy et Leprince de Beaumont, *Contes de Fées* (Paris: Garnier, 1870). Xilography after drawing of Gustave Pierre Eugene Staal.



Fig. 23. Charles Lamb, *The Absence of Beauty Lamented, Beauty and the Beast or a Rough Outside with a Gentle Heart* (London: G. Goodwin, n.d. [1811]). Anonymous chalcographic engraving in color.





Fig. 24. Mme Leprince de Beaumont, *Le Magasin des Enfants*, deuxième édition (Paris: Librairie pittoresque de la jeunesse, 1846). Lithography in two colors by Adolphe Mouilleron, lithographic stabilization by Fernique and Co.



Fig. 25. Andrew Lang, ed. *The Blue Fairy Book* (London: Longman Green and Co., 1895). Line drawing by Henry Justice Ford.



Fig. 26. "Ah! What a fright you have given me! she murmured," *Beauty and the Beast*, in *The Sleeping Beauty and other fairy tales*, retold by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910). Color illustrations by Edmund Dulac.

## NOTES

1. "La Belle et la Bête," in Mme Leprince de Beaumont, *Magasin des Enfants, ou Dialogues d'une sage gouvernante et plusieurs de ses élèves de la première distinction*, Vème Dialogue, Troisième Journée (London: Haberkorn, 1756).
2. Quoted in Marc Soriano, *Les Contes de Perrault* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 191 *passim*.
3. Mme de Lescure, *Histoire des fées et de la Littérature Féerique en France*, in *Le Monde enchanté*, Choix de douze contes de fées de Perrault, Mlle L'Héritier, Mme d'Aulnoy, Mlle de La Force, le comte de Caylus, Mme Leprince de Beaumont (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1883).
4. See Bruno Bettelheim, "The Animal Groom Cycle of Fairy Tales," in *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 277-285. Italian translation: *Il mondo incantato* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977), pp. 266-297.
5. Jacques Barchilon, "Beauty and the Beast, from Myth to Fairy Tale," in *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (1960), and "La Belle et la Bête," ou le passage d'un mythe au conte de fées," in *Le Conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1970* (Paris: Champion, 1975), pp. 1-12.
6. See "Il Re Porco," in Gian-Francesco Straparola's *Piacevoli notti* (1550), Seconda Notte, Storia I, "Lo Catenaccio," in Giambattista Basile's *Lo*

*Cunto de li cunti* (1634), Secondo Giorno, Favola V, Catherine Bernard, *Ines de Cordoue* (1697), "La Bulle et la Bête," in Mme Gabrielle-Susanne Bardot de Villeneuve, *La jeune Américaine et les contes marins* (Amsterdam: Aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1740).

7. According to our research on 44 illustrated versions, in most of these images, the beast is standing; in 20, the beast wears no clothes, in 22, it is clothed or partially clothed. Most of the beasts have tusks, pointed ears or horns, and they can be grouped or identified according to the following typology: 11 dog-wolves, 6 felines, 3 bulls or rams, 3 bull-ram-devils, 3 boars, 2 (each) bears, elephants, dragons, ogres, giants, wild-men, hybrids, 1 (each) monkey, donkey, mouse or rat. For the iconography of the beast, see especially S. Canhan, "What Manner of Beast? Illustrations of 'Beauty and the Beast,'" in *Image and Maker. An Annual dedicated to the Consideration of Book Illustration* (La Jolla, California: Green Tiger Press, 1984), pp. 13-25. For further data and iconography, see E. de Rossignoli, *La bella e la bestia, in io credo nei vampiri* (Milano: Ferriani, 1961), pp. 240-244; see also Iona and Peter Opie, *The Classic Fairy Tales* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974) and Jakc Zipes, "The Dark Side of Beauty and the Beast," in *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Conference of the Children's Literature Association*, University of Minnesota, March 1981 (Boston: Children's Literature Association, 1981), pp. 119-125.

8. Concerning the film *La Belle et la Bête*, see the diary of its production by Jean Cocteau, as well as a complete filmography in Jean Boulet, *La Belle et la Bête* (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1958).

9. Pierre Grimal, *Mito et Favola, Mitografia Classica*, in *Encyclopedia Universale dell'Arte*, vol. IX (Firenze: Novara, De Agostini, 1982), col. 417.

10. M.P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* (Lund, 1950) cited in P. Grimal, *op. cit.*, iv.

11. The Oriental garb worn by all or some of the protagonists in the illustrations appearing in Mme Leprince de Beaumont's *Magasin des Enfants* (Paris: Le Prieur, 1807 and Paris: Billois, 1808), drawn and engraved in chalcography by Huot; [Charles Lamb], *Beauty and the Beast or a Rough Outside with a Gentle Heart* (London: Goodwin, n.d. [1811]), with anonymous chalcography; [Leprince de] Beaumont, *Beauty and the Beast*, edition by F. Summerly (London: J. Cundall, 1843), with lithographies by John Callicot Horsely.

12. Concerning the principal stage adaptations see Mme de Genlis, *La Belle et la Bête*, in *Théâtre d'éducation* (Paris, 1779); *Beauty and the Beast or The Magic Rose* (London: Royal Coburg Theater, 1819), and *Beauty and the Beast, Songs, Duets, Chorusses, &c.* by J.R. Planché (London: Fairbrother, 1841), staged at Royal Theater, Covent Garden, April 12, 1841.

13. J.F. Marmontel, *Zémire et Azor*, in *Recueil Général des Opéra* . . . , Tome 7 (Paris, 1778).

14. For this quotation and other data concerning *Zémire et Azor*, see Joseph Méry, *Préface* a Mme de Beaumont's *Contes de Fees* (Paris: Librairie Centrale, 1865), p. 1 and following.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paola Pallottino, University of Bologna, is the only professor appointed to teach the History of Book Illustration in Italy. She publishes regularly for Italian and Swiss scholarly reviews articles in the field of graphic art. She has contributed articles to the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, and to the *Dictionnaire des Illustrateurs*. She is the author of the *Storia dell'illustrazione italiana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1988), plus other volumes, notably, *Grandezza e dignità delle 'figurine' di Francesco Carnevali* (1982) and *Caste dive nella vampa stridente* (1983).

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